

Congressional E911 Caucus Introduces Legislation to Fund and Improve 9-1-1 Systems

Washington, D.C.

- The bi-partisan, bi-cameral Congressional E-911 Caucus, co-chaired by Rep. Anna G. Eshoo (D-CA), Rep. John Shimkus (R-IL), Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-MI), and Sen. Richard Burr (R-NC), is introducing legislation to upgrade America's 9-1-1 call center technology nationwide. The Next Generation 9-1-1 Preservation Act of 2010 reauthorizes key grants and programs to ensure continued funding for the nation's 6,000 9-1-1 centers and programs. The Senate will introduce the measure on Monday, while the House introduced their version today.

"This bill is about public safety at its most basic level. Our 9-1-1 call centers are the first point of contact for Americans in an emergency situation," Rep. Eshoo said. "We need to make certain they have all the tools necessary to stay safe and get help when they need it."

The 9-1-1 call centers receive more than 650,000 distress calls from across the nation every day and are primarily funded through state taxes on phone bills. The Next Generation 9-1-1 Preservation Act reauthorizes a five year federal grant program to support state 9-1-1 services and improve technology. It also introduces improvements to the national E911 Implementation Coordination Office, which helps states to upgrade technology and coordinate services between call centers.

"This legislation is about more than reauthorizing grant programs, it's about creating and maintaining a coordinated approach to 9-1-1 response technology on a nationwide level," Rep. Shimkus said. "The Next Generation 9-1-1 technology needs to be fostered and advanced by experts on a national level with the resources to target specific public safety needs."

"Every day, 9-1-1 call centers provide emergency and often life saving services to Americans," said Klobuchar. "We need to make sure the technology of our 9-1-1 call centers is updated so that emergency personnel have the tools they need to keep people safe and provide assistance to those in need."

"This reauthorization is a real step forward in getting our rescue workers the tools they need," Senator Burr said. "Technology has come a long way since the 9-1-1 system was first established, and we must continue to modernize our call centers to keep up with these changes. This legislation will ensure necessary upgrades for the emergency response

infrastructure, and will ensure that E9-1-1 fees are used for their intended purposes."

According to the Federal Communications Commission, some states have a history of diverting their 9-1-1 funds to support other programs. The Next Generation 9-1-1 Preservation Act prevents states that divert funds from receiving the grants in the legislation.

"This is the carrot and stick approach. This bill makes certain that 9-1-1 funds actually go toward funding 9-1-1- call centers," Rep. Eshoo said. "We need to make certain that the funds are used for the purpose that they are intended if we want to maintain our emergency call centers."

The E911 Caucus is bi-partisan and bi-cameral and dedicated to the education of Members of the House and Senate about the relationship of E911 call center technology to public safety. House Co-chairs Eshoo and Shimkus founded the group 7 years ago to educate their colleagues about the importance of 9-1-1 call centers and the need for technology improvements to speed public safety's coordination and response time to emergencies. Both are senior members of the House Communications, Technology and the Internet Subcommittee.

Senate Co-chair Klobuchar serves on the Senate Commerce Committee, which oversees public safety communications issues. Co-chair Burr serves on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and maintains an active interest in communications policies affecting government agencies and public safety entities.

The Caucus works to achieve the continued reliability of 9-1-1 over legacy and future communications services and applications; a coordinated transition to Next Generation 9-1-1 and emergency communications systems; recognition of 9-1-1 as an integral part of our nation's homeland security; aggressive and effective oversight of federal agencies responsible for 9-1-1; effective education of the public on the appropriate use of 9-1-1; proper funding for 9-1-1 systems, networks, operations, and training; effective and direct access to emergency response systems for persons with disabilities; and improved coordination and information sharing across jurisdictional boundaries and among emergency response personnel and organizations.

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